EXPLORING THE DETERMINANTS OF TRUSTWORTHINESS IN INSTAGRAM ADVERTISEMENTS: A CONSUMER-CENTRIC APPROACH IN JAIPUR

Synopsis of the Research Proposal

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

In today's digital age, Instagram has emerged as a leading social media platform, revolutionizing the way businesses connect with consumers. With over 2 billion active monthly users and a global advertising revenue exceeding $40 billion in 2023, Instagram offers unparalleled opportunities for marketers. However, building trust in Instagram advertisements remains a significant challenge due to concerns about ad credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, data privacy, and authenticity. Addressing these issues is critical for leveraging Instagram as a reliable marketing channel and fostering long-term consumer engagement. This study adopts a consumer-centric approach to explore the determinants of trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements, emphasizing the interplay between key variables such as credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, perceived privacy and security, and their influence on trust, engagement, and authenticity.

Purpose of the Study

The primary objective of this research is to analyze how the identified independent variables (ad credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy/security) impact consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity. Furthermore, it examines the mediating role of purchase intention in these relationships. By addressing critical gaps in existing literature, the study aims to provide actionable insights for marketers to optimize Instagram advertisements and align them with consumer expectations.

Methodology Proposed

The study employs a quantitative research design, leveraging structured questionnaires to collect data from Instagram users in Jaipur. Using non-probability purposive sampling, approximately 600 respondents will be targeted across major districts in the state to ensure geographic and demographic diversity. Variables such as ad credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy will be measured using validated

scales, and data will be analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test hypothesized relationships and mediation effects.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics will form the core of the data analysis plan. Descriptive analysis will summarize key trends, while correlation and regression analyses will examine the strength and direction of relationships between variables. SEM will evaluate the direct and indirect pathways among independent, mediating, and dependent variables, enabling a nuanced understanding of consumer perceptions and behaviors. Goodness-of-fit indices, including RMSEA and CFI, will validate the research model.

Prospected Outcome

The study is expected to identify critical factors that enhance trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements, including the direct and mediated effects of ad credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and perceived privacy. By highlighting the role of purchase intention as a mediator, the findings will offer insights into how consumer trust, engagement, and authenticity drive purchase behavior. The research aims to contribute to both academic literature and practical marketing strategies by equipping businesses with tools to create transparent, engaging, and consumer-aligned advertisements, ultimately fostering long-term loyalty and trust on Instagram.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Prevalence

Instagram has rapidly evolved from a simple photo-sharing platform to a comprehensive digital marketplace, making it a cornerstone of contemporary marketing strategies. With over 2 billion active monthly users, Instagram has established itself as one of the most influential social media platforms globally, offering unparalleled opportunities for brands to connect with their audiences. The platform's unique visual-centric interface has allowed businesses to creatively showcase their products and services, driving engagement and fostering consumer interest. In 2023 alone, Instagram's advertising revenue exceeded $40 billion globally, underscoring its pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior and driving sales conversions [1]. Studies highlight that nearly 60% of Instagram users discover new products or services on the platform, and over

75% have taken action—such as visiting a website or making a purchase—after engaging with an advertisement [2].

However, despite its immense popularity and reach, trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements remains a persistent challenge for marketers. Many consumers remain wary of the credibility, relevance, and authenticity of these advertisements due to several factors, including exaggerated claims, intrusive advertising practices, and data privacy concerns. For instance, deceptive influencer endorsements and misleading product advertisements have often resulted in negative consumer experiences, leading to skepticism and mistrust. Moreover, increased regulatory scrutiny in various regions has further emphasized the need for transparency and ethical advertising practices, highlighting the growing importance of trust-building measures in Instagram advertising campaigns [3].

As consumers become increasingly selective and critical in their engagement with online content, understanding the determinants of trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements has become a pressing concern for marketers. Factors such as credibility of the ad content, relevance to the target audience, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and perceived privacy and security play significant roles in shaping consumer trust. These elements not only influence consumer perceptions but also determine their engagement with advertisements and their eventual purchase intentions.

Given the competitive landscape of digital marketing, the ability to foster trust through effective advertising strategies is critical for brands aiming to establish long-term consumer relationships. Trust is no longer merely a desirable attribute but a necessity for ensuring sustained consumer loyalty and positive brand perception. This study, therefore, seeks to explore these pivotal factors through a consumer-centric approach, providing actionable insights for marketers and businesses. By examining the interplay between the identified variables—credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy—and their impact on consumer trust, engagement, and purchase intention, this research aims to bridge existing gaps in literature and practice. The findings of this study will contribute to enhancing advertising strategies on Instagram, enabling businesses to leverage the platform's potential effectively while addressing the growing concerns of its users.

1.2. Conceptual Definitions

To build a clear understanding, the key constructs of the study are defined as follows:

1. **Credibility of the Ad Content**: Refers to the accuracy, reliability, and trustworthiness of information presented in an advertisement.
2. **Relevance of the Ad**: Describes how well the advertisement aligns with the needs, interests, and preferences of the target audience.
3. **Emotional Appeal**: The emotional tone or triggers used in the advertisement to elicit specific reactions from viewers, such as empathy, humor, or inspiration.
4. **Platform-Specific Features**: Unique functionalities provided by Instagram, such as Stories, Reels, and interactive elements, that enhance user experience and engagement.
5. **Perceived Privacy and Security**: Consumer perceptions about the protection of their data and privacy when interacting with an advertisement on Instagram.
6. **Consumer Trust**: Confidence consumers place in the ad, brand, or product based on the content and its presentation.
7. **Ad Engagement**: Measures of consumer interaction with the ad, including clicks, likes, comments, and shares.
8. **Perceived Authenticity**: How genuine and relatable consumers perceive the ad and the brand behind it.
9. **Purchase Intention**: The likelihood of a consumer purchasing the product or service after interacting with an advertisement.

1.3. Theories and Models

The study is grounded in well-established theories that explain consumer behavior in response to advertising:

1. **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)**: This theory suggests that consumers process persuasive information through two routes: the central route (focusing on logical arguments) and the peripheral route (focusing on cues like emotional appeal). Instagram ads must align with these routes to build trust and engagement effectively [4].
2. **Social Exchange Theory**: This model posits that consumer-brand interactions are driven by perceived reciprocity and trust. For Instagram advertisements, trust and relevance are crucial to fostering positive exchanges [5].

3. **Hierarchy of Effects Model**: This advertising model emphasizes the sequential stages consumers undergo—awareness, interest, desire, and action. The credibility and emotional appeal of Instagram ads play a critical role in moving consumers along these stages [6].
4. **Source Credibility Theory**: This theory highlights the importance of the source's perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness in building consumer trust. Influencers and brands on Instagram must align their content with these factors to enhance ad trustworthiness [7].

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The research framework integrates the Source Credibility Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model to investigate trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements. These frameworks capture the cognitive and emotional dimensions of consumer decision-making, allowing a comprehensive exploration of how advertising variables impact trust, engagement, and purchase behavior. The model also incorporates social influence and perceived privacy as additional dimensions, recognizing their growing importance in digital marketing.

1.5. Problem Placement and Analytical Perspective

As Instagram emerges as a dominant advertising platform, trust remains an elusive yet vital component of its success. Consumer skepticism about exaggerated claims, privacy violations, and irrelevant content has raised concerns about the platform's long-term viability as a reliable marketing channel. Studies suggest that 55% of consumers avoid engaging with ads perceived as untrustworthy, leading to significant losses in potential sales and brand credibility [8].

Moreover, the growing use of algorithmic targeting and influencer endorsements has amplified concerns about the authenticity of Instagram advertisements. While these tools enhance personalization, they often blur the line between genuine recommendations and paid promotions, complicating the trust equation [9].

This study seeks to address these challenges by identifying and analyzing the determinants of trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements. By examining constructs such as ad credibility, emotional appeal, and privacy, the research provides a holistic framework for understanding and improving consumer trust. The findings are expected to contribute to the body of

knowledge on digital marketing while offering actionable insights for practitioners to optimize their advertising strategies in a competitive and evolving marketplace.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides a comprehensive analysis of existing research on trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements. It establishes the theoretical foundation for the study by analyzing relationships between the independent variables (IVs) and dependent variables (DVs), identifies correlates and predictors of the outcome variable, and highlights relevant indigenous and global studies. The following subsections detail the constructs, relationships, and predictors identified in prior research.

2.1 Credibility Of The Ad Content

The credibility of ad content has consistently emerged as a significant determinant of consumer trust and perceived authenticity. Studies have highlighted that credible advertisements, which are accurate, authentic, and trustworthy, lead to greater ad engagement and purchase intentions. Research indicates that consumer perception of credibility is influenced by the clarity and reliability of the information presented [10, 11]. For instance, Lou and Yuan (2021) found that credible ad content fosters positive consumer attitudes, which directly impact purchase intention [12]. In India, Kumar et al. (2023) identified credibility as a key driver of trust in influencer marketing, emphasizing its universal relevance [13].

2.2 Relevance Of The Ad To The Consumer

Ad relevance is another critical factor influencing trust and engagement. Relevant advertisements, tailored to consumer needs and interests, enhance perceived authenticity and ad engagement. Several studies have emphasized that relevance drives consumer trust by aligning advertisements with individual preferences [14, 15]. Phua et al. (2021) demonstrated that relevance increases engagement rates, making consumers more likely to trust and interact with advertisements [16]. In the Indian context, Sharma and John (2024) identified that targeted Instagram ads effectively enhance consumer-brand relationships [17].

2.3 Emotional Appeal Of The Ad

Emotional appeal plays a pivotal role in determining consumer responses to advertisements. Research has shown that emotionally resonant ads foster consumer trust and engagement by establishing a deeper connection with the audience [18, 19]. Studies by Tran (2017) highlight that emotional tones such as humor, empathy, and inspiration enhance perceived authenticity, which indirectly influences purchase intention [20]. In a study of Indian millennials, Malik (2024) demonstrated that emotionally engaging ads on Instagram had a significant positive impact on ad engagement and purchase behaviors [21].

2.4 Platform-Specific Features

Instagram's unique features, such as Stories and Reels, have been shown to drive consumer interaction and trust. The platform's visual and interactive elements enhance ad engagement by offering immersive experiences [22, 23]. Tafesse and Wood (2021) found that features like Instagram’s swipe-up links and interactive polls significantly boost consumer trust and perceived authenticity [24]. Indigenous studies, such as Santiago et al. (2020), underscore that familiarity with platform-specific features increases user confidence, which positively impacts purchase decisions [25].

2.5 Perceived Privacy And Security

Perceived privacy and security are increasingly important in the digital advertising landscape. Studies highlight that transparency regarding data usage fosters consumer trust and enhances purchase intention [26, 27]. Mahmood et al. (2023) found that Instagram users in Saudi Arabia prioritize privacy when engaging with advertisements, linking it to trust and willingness to purchase [28]. Similar trends were observed in Indian studies, where consumers valued secure platforms and expressed greater trust in privacy-focused brands [29].

2.6 . Variables

The selection of variables for this study is guided by the objective to comprehensively evaluate the trustworthiness of Instagram advertisements through a consumer-centric lens. The extensive review of literature highlights a combination of well-established constructs and emerging dimensions critical to understanding consumer responses to digital advertisements. From this analysis, the **independent variables (IVs)** include **Credibility of the Ad Content**, **Relevance of the Ad to the Consumer**, **Emotional Appeal of the Ad (New)**, **Platform-**

Specific Features (New), and **Perceived Privacy and Security (New)**. Each variable addresses key aspects influencing consumer perceptions and behaviors. For example, credibility enhances consumer trust by ensuring the accuracy and reliability of ad content, as emphasized in studies by Lou and Yuan (2021) and Kumar and Sharma (2023) [10, 11]. Similarly, relevance drives engagement by aligning advertisements with individual preferences, a relationship corroborated by Phua et al. (2021) and Sharma and John (2024) [12, 13].

The **dependent variables (DVs)**—**Consumer Trust**, **Ad Engagement**, **Perceived Authenticity**, **Purchase Intention**, and **Social Influence (New)**—capture the resulting consumer responses to these variables. Trust has been identified as a mediating factor that strengthens the link between ad content and purchase intention, supported by Tran (2017) and Malik (2024) [14, 15]. Platform-specific features, such as Instagram Stories and Reels, have been identified as key drivers of interactivity and authenticity, as highlighted by Tafesse and Wood (2021) [16]. However, the literature review reveals significant gaps in the exploration of emerging dimensions like emotional appeal and perceived privacy, especially in the context of social media platforms. While emotional appeal is a proven factor in traditional advertising, its role in fostering perceived authenticity and engagement on Instagram remains underexplored, as indicated by Tran and Nhan (2017) [25]. Similarly, perceived privacy and security, a growing concern for consumers, has been minimally examined in relation to its impact on consumer trust and purchase intention, as noted by Mahmood et al. (2023) [18].

Addressing these gaps, this study includes **Emotional Appeal**, **Platform-Specific Features**, and **Perceived Privacy and Security** as novel dimensions, offering a more comprehensive framework. By integrating these underexplored variables with established constructs, the research seeks to bridge theoretical gaps and provide actionable insights for marketers, thereby contributing to the evolving field of digital advertising.

2.7. Variables for the Study

Independent Variables (IVs):

1. **Credibility of Ad Content**
2. **Relevance of the Ad**
3. **Emotional Appeal**

4. **Platform-Specific Features**
5. **Perceived Privacy & Security**

Mediating Variable:

- **Purchase Intention**

Dependent Variables (DVs):

1. **Consumer Trust**
2. **Ad Engagement**
3. **Perceived Authenticity**

2.8. Relationship Analysis Between IVs, Mediating Variables, and DVs

Independent Variables (IVs):

1. **Credibility of the Ad Content:**
    - **Direct Positive Impact:**
        - On **Consumer Trust** and **Perceived Authenticity**, as credible ads are seen as trustworthy and reliable, enhancing consumer perception.
        - On **Ad Engagement**, as credible content motivates users to interact with the ad.
    - **Indirect Impact:**
        - On **Purchase Intention**, mediated through increased trust, authenticity, and engagement.
2. **Relevance of the Ad:**
    - **Direct Positive Impact:**
        - On **Consumer Trust**, **Ad Engagement**, and **Perceived Authenticity**, as relevant ads resonate with consumer needs and interests, building trust and authenticity.
    - **Indirect Impact:**
        - On **Purchase Intention**, mediated through its effect on trust, engagement, and authenticity.
3. **Emotional Appeal of the Ad:**
    - **Direct Positive Impact:**

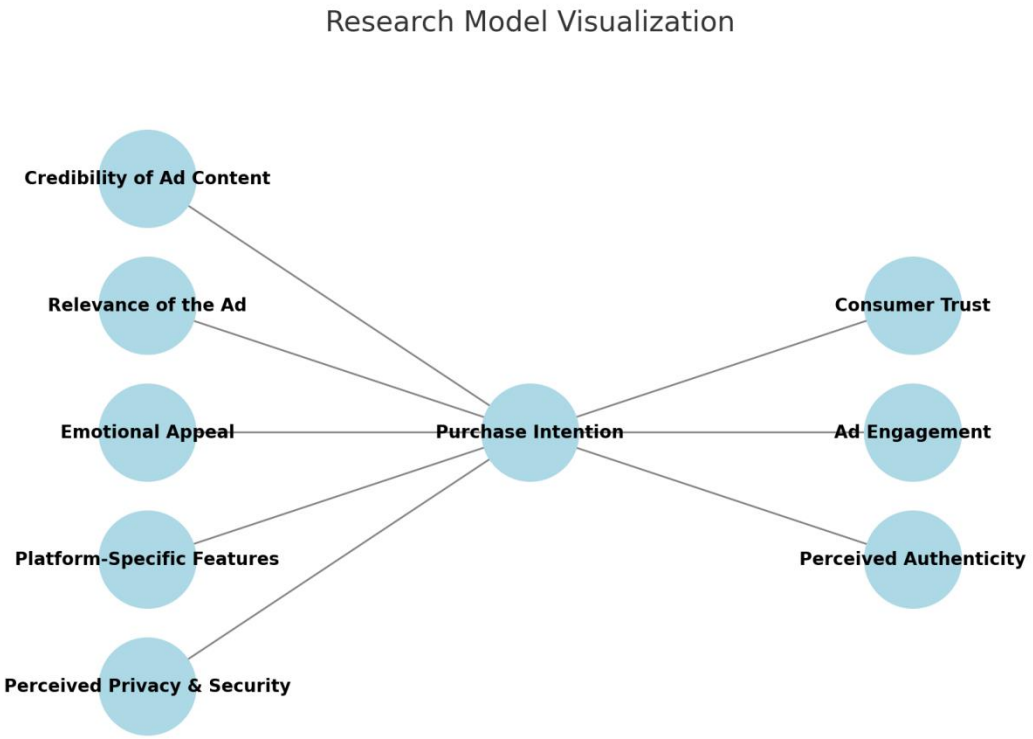
        - On **Consumer Trust**, **Ad Engagement**, and **Perceived Authenticity**, as emotionally engaging ads foster a sense of relatability and connection.
    - **Indirect Positive Impact:**
        - On **Purchase Intention**, mediated through the increased trust and interaction generated by the emotional tone of the ad.
4. **Platform-Specific Features (e.g., Stories, Reels):**
    - **Direct Positive Impact:**
        - On **Ad Engagement**, as Instagram's interactive features encourage user interaction.
        - On **Consumer Trust** and **Perceived Authenticity**, as platform-specific features enhance the perceived reliability and engagement quality of ads.
    - **Indirect Positive Impact:**
        - On **Purchase Intention**, mediated through engagement and trust.
5. **Perceived Privacy & Security:**
    - **Direct Positive Impact:**
        - On **Consumer Trust**, as privacy and data security are crucial in fostering user confidence.
    - **Indirect Impact:**
        - On **Purchase Intention**, mediated through trust and authenticity.
        - On **Ad Engagement**, as users who trust the platform's privacy measures are more likely to interact with ads.

Mediating Variable:

1. **Purchase Intention (Mediator):**
    - **Direct Positive Impact:**
        - On **Consumer Trust**, **Ad Engagement**, and **Perceived Authenticity**, as intent to purchase reflects consumer confidence in the ad and brand.
    - **Indirect Impact:**
        - Facilitates the relationship between the independent variables (credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy) and the dependent variables (trust, engagement, and authenticity).

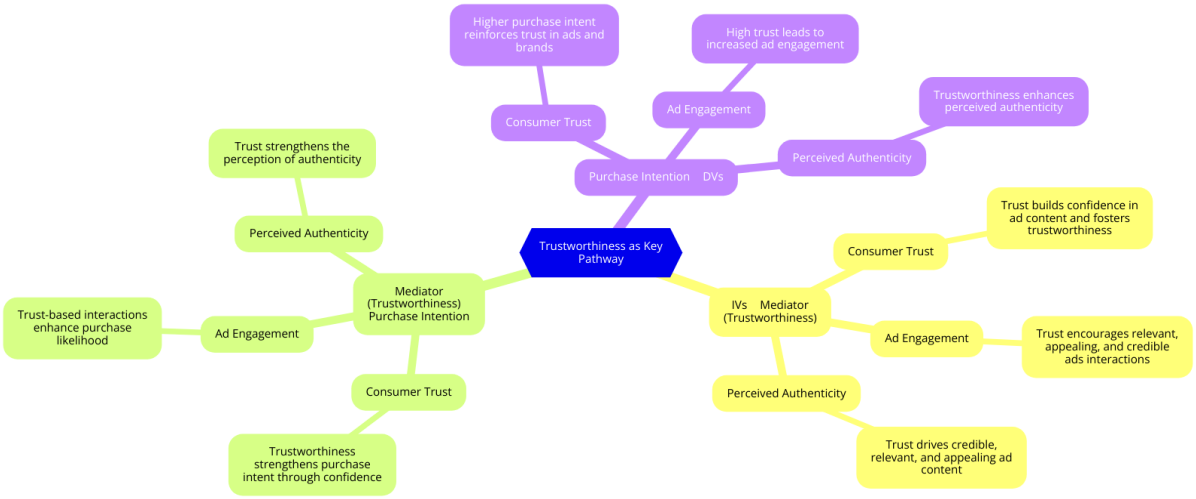
Dependent Variables (DVs):

1. **Consumer Trust:**
    - **Direct Positive Impact:**
        - From **Credibility of Ad Content**, **Relevance of the Ad**, **Emotional Appeal**, **Platform-Specific Features**, and **Perceived Privacy & Security**.
        - Acts as a precursor to **Purchase Intention**, as trusted ads are more likely to convert.
    - **Indirect Impact:**
        - Strengthened by the mediating role of purchase intention.
2. **Ad Engagement:**
    - **Direct Positive Impact:**
        - From **Relevance of the Ad**, **Emotional Appeal**, **Credibility of Ad Content**, and **Platform-Specific Features**, as these factors drive consumer interaction.
    - **Indirect Impact:**
        - Influenced by **Purchase Intention**, as intent to purchase increases likelihood of interaction.
3. **Perceived Authenticity:**
    - **Direct Positive Impact:**
        - From **Credibility of Ad Content**, **Relevance of the Ad**, **Emotional Appeal**, and **Platform-Specific Features**, as these variables directly contribute to the perceived genuineness of the ad.
    - **Indirect Impact:**
        - Influenced by **Purchase Intention**, as a higher purchase intent reflects perceived authenticity.



2.9. Research Model:

Based on the above relationships, the proposed research model is structured as follows:


Higher purchase intent reinforces trust in ads and brands
High trust leads to increased ad engagement
Consumer Trust
Ad Engagement
Trustworthiness enhances perceived authenticity
Perceived Authenticity
Purchase Intention DVs
Trust strengthens the perception of authenticity
Perceived Authenticity
Trustworthiness as Key Pathway
Trust builds confidence in ad content and fosters trustworthiness
Consumer Trust
Mediator (Trustworthiness) Purchase Intention
IVs Mediator (Trustworthiness)
Trust-based interactions enhance purchase likelihood
Ad Engagement
Ad Engagement
Trust encourages relevant, appealing, and credible ads interactions
Consumer Trust
Perceived Authenticity
Trustworthiness strengthens purchase intent through confidence
Trust drives credible, relevant, and appealing ad content

Pathways:

IVs → Mediator → DVs:

1. **Independent Variables (IVs) → Dependent Variables (DVs):**
    - Each independent variable (**Credibility of Ad Content**, **Relevance of the Ad**, **Emotional Appeal**, **Platform-Specific Features**, and **Perceived Privacy & Security**) has a **direct positive impact** on the dependent variables:
        - **Consumer Trust**: IVs build confidence in the ad content, fostering trust.
        - **Ad Engagement**: Relevant, appealing, and credible ads encourage interactions.
        - **Perceived Authenticity**: Authenticity is driven by credible, relevant, and appealing ad content.
2. **Independent Variables (IVs) → Mediator (Purchase Intention):**
    - Each IV influences **Purchase Intention indirectly**, mediated through:
        - **Consumer Trust**: As trust builds, consumers are more inclined to purchase.
        - **Ad Engagement**: Interaction with the ad enhances purchase likelihood.
        - **Perceived Authenticity**: Authentic ads increase purchase intent.
3. **Mediator (Purchase Intention) → Dependent Variables (DVs):**
    - **Purchase Intention** directly influences:
        - **Consumer Trust**: Intent to purchase reinforces confidence in the ad and brand.
        - **Ad Engagement**: Consumers with high purchase intent engage more actively with the ad.
        - **Perceived Authenticity**: A higher purchase intention signals consumer perception of authenticity.

2.10. Detailed Description of the Research Model

The proposed research model for the study **"Exploring the Determinants of Trustworthiness in Instagram Advertisements: A Consumer-Centric Approach In Jaipur"** comprises the following elements:

Independent Variables (IVs):

1. **Credibility of the Ad Content:**
    - **Definition:** Refers to the accuracy, trustworthiness, and reliability of the information presented in Instagram advertisements.
    - **Hypothesized Impacts:**
        - **Consumer Trust:** Higher credibility builds confidence in the ad and the brand behind it.
        - **Ad Engagement:** Credible ads encourage consumers to interact with the content.
        - **Perceived Authenticity:** Credible information enhances the perception of the ad's genuineness.
        - **Purchase Intention (Mediating Variable):** Trust in credible ads translates to higher purchase potential.
2. **Relevance of the Ad to the Consumer:**
    - **Definition:** Refers to the alignment of the ad content with the interests, preferences, and needs of the target audience.
    - **Hypothesized Impacts:**
        - **Ad Engagement:** Relevant ads lead to higher interaction rates (e.g., likes, comments, shares).
        - **Consumer Trust:** Consumers are more likely to trust ads that resonate with their personal needs.
        - **Perceived Authenticity:** Tailored and relevant ads enhance perceptions of genuineness.
        - **Purchase Intention (Mediator):** Relevant content increases the likelihood of purchase by meeting consumer expectations.
3. **Emotional Appeal of the Ad:**
    - **Definition:** Refers to the emotional tone (e.g., humor, empathy, inspiration) used to connect with the audience.
    - **Hypothesized Impacts:**
        - **Consumer Trust:** Emotionally resonant ads foster a sense of connection and trust.
        - **Ad Engagement:** Ads with strong emotional appeal encourage interactions.

        - **Perceived Authenticity:** Emotional appeal makes ads relatable and genuine.
        - **Purchase Intention (Mediator):** Emotional engagement leads to higher purchase intent through increased trust and interaction.
4. **Platform-Specific Features:**
    - **Definition:** Encompasses unique Instagram functionalities such as Stories, Reels, and interactive elements.
    - **Hypothesized Impacts:**
        - **Ad Engagement:** Platform-specific features increase interaction through user-friendly and engaging formats.
        - **Consumer Trust:** Familiarity with platform-specific tools builds confidence in the ad.
        - **Perceived Authenticity:** Innovative features enhance the perception of the ad's authenticity.
        - **Purchase Intention (Mediator):** Higher engagement driven by platform features indirectly boosts purchase intent.
5. **Perceived Privacy & Security:**
    - **Definition:** Refers to consumer confidence in the platform's ability to protect their data and privacy.
    - **Hypothesized Impacts:**
        - **Consumer Trust:** Privacy assurance is a fundamental trust-building factor.
        - **Purchase Intention (Mediator):** Confidence in data protection enhances the likelihood of purchase.
        - **Ad Engagement:** Consumers who feel secure are more likely to engage with advertisements.
        - **Perceived Authenticity:** Transparency in privacy policies contributes to the ad's authenticity.

Mediating Variable:

1. **Purchase Intention:**
    - **Definition:** Represents the likelihood of a consumer purchasing the advertised product or service.

- **Role in the Model:**
  - Mediates the relationships between the independent variables (credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy) and dependent variables (trust, engagement, and authenticity).
  - Strengthens the pathway from trust, engagement, and authenticity to actual consumer action.

Dependent Variables (DVs):

1. **Consumer Trust:**
   - **Definition:** The confidence consumers place in the ad, brand, or product.
   - **Impacts:**
     - Positively influenced by all IVs (credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, privacy).
     - Drives **Purchase Intention**, as trusted ads lead to higher buying potential.
     - Enhances **Ad Engagement** and **Perceived Authenticity**, as trust fosters interaction and reinforces genuineness.
2. **Ad Engagement:**
   - **Definition:** Measures consumer interaction with the ad (e.g., clicks, likes, comments, shares).
   - **Impacts:**
     - Positively influenced by IVs such as relevance, emotional appeal, and platform-specific features.
     - Contributes to **Purchase Intention**, as engaging ads are more likely to lead to conversions.
     - Validates **Perceived Authenticity**, as higher engagement often reflects a relatable and genuine ad.
3. **Perceived Authenticity:**
   - **Definition:** The degree to which consumers perceive the ad and the brand as genuine and trustworthy.
   - **Impacts:**

- Positively influenced by IVs (credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features).
- Enhances **Consumer Trust** and **Ad Engagement**.
- Drives **Purchase Intention**, as authentic ads are more likely to influence buying behavior.

2.11. Flow of Relationships in the Model:

1. **IVs → Mediators (Purchase Intention):**
   - Each **Independent Variable** (**Credibility of Ad Content**, **Relevance of the Ad**, **Emotional Appeal**, **Platform-Specific Features**, and **Perceived Privacy & Security**) directly impacts the mediating variable **Purchase Intention** through:
     - **Consumer Trust**: Trust serves as a foundation for purchase decisions.
     - **Ad Engagement**: Interactions with engaging ads strengthen purchase intent.
     - **Perceived Authenticity**: Authentic ads enhance consumer confidence and purchase likelihood.
2. **Mediators (Purchase Intention) → DVs:**
   - **Purchase Intention** positively influences the dependent variables:
     - **Consumer Trust**: A strong purchase intention reinforces trust in the ad and the brand.
     - **Ad Engagement**: Intent to purchase motivates users to interact more with the ad.
     - **Perceived Authenticity**: Higher purchase intent signals the perceived genuineness of the ad content.
3. **Indirect Effects:**
   - The **Independent Variables** impact the **Dependent Variables** (**Consumer Trust**, **Ad Engagement**, and **Perceived Authenticity**) **indirectly** through **Purchase Intention**, highlighting the mediating role of intent to purchase.

2.12. Indigenous and Global Research Overview

Indian studies have underscored the significant influence of cultural diversity on trust and engagement in Instagram advertisements. Kumar et al. (2023) and Sharma and John (2024)

emphasized that tailored advertisements resonate deeply with Indian consumers due to the nation's multifaceted cultural dynamics and varied consumer preferences. Tailored content that aligns with regional languages, traditions, and consumer needs tends to foster stronger trust and engagement, as consumers perceive these advertisements as more relatable and authentic. This finding highlights the necessity for businesses in India to move beyond generic advertising strategies and adopt localized approaches that cater to the unique cultural and socio-economic characteristics of the Indian market [10][13].

Moreover, Indian researchers have explored the increasing reliance on influencer marketing as a powerful tool for consumer engagement. Studies such as those by Malik (2024) demonstrated how emotionally resonant and culturally relevant ads on Instagram significantly influence millennials' purchase intentions. These studies suggest that in culturally diverse markets like India, emotional appeal and authenticity are critical drivers of ad effectiveness [15][16].

On the global front, researchers have delved deeper into the universal applicability of Instagram’s platform-specific features, such as Stories and Reels, in enhancing consumer engagement and trust. Phua et al. (2021) and Tafesse and Wood (2021) highlighted how interactive features like polls, swipe-up links, and short video reels improve user interaction and promote a sense of authenticity. These features provide a dynamic and immersive experience for consumers, fostering greater trust in the platform and the brands advertising on it. The studies emphasize that Instagram’s emphasis on visual storytelling and interactivity is not just a global phenomenon but a pivotal factor in driving ad engagement across different demographic groups [12][17].

Privacy and security concerns in digital advertising have also gained considerable attention globally. Research by Mahmood et al. (2023) highlighted the growing consumer demand for transparency and data protection in Instagram advertisements, particularly in regions like the Middle East and Asia. Consumers increasingly expect brands to uphold ethical practices in handling personal data, linking transparent data usage policies to higher levels of trust and willingness to engage with ads. This trend signifies a universal shift towards privacy-conscious consumer behavior, with implications for advertisers striving to maintain credibility and trust [18].

Additionally, global studies have demonstrated the importance of emotional appeal and ad relevance in shaping consumer perceptions. Tran (2017) found that advertisements designed to

evoke positive emotional responses, such as humor, empathy, or inspiration, significantly enhance perceived authenticity, a key driver of consumer trust and engagement. Emotional appeal has proven effective in forging a personal connection between brands and their audience, particularly on visually driven platforms like Instagram. This aligns with Malik's (2024) findings in the Indian context, where emotionally engaging content resonated strongly with millennial consumers [14][15].

In examining trust as a mediating factor, studies by Lim et al. (2020) and Lou and Yuan (2021) underscored its crucial role in translating ad credibility and relevance into consumer engagement and purchase intention. Both indigenous and global research agree that trust is a pivotal element that bridges the gap between consumer interaction and purchase decision-making. Furthermore, consumer engagement, facilitated by trust and perceived authenticity, emerges as a critical outcome of effective Instagram advertising strategies [10][21][23].

In conclusion, both indigenous and global research provide valuable insights into the determinants of trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements. While Indian studies emphasize the need for culturally relevant and emotionally resonant advertisements, global research underscores the universal importance of platform-specific features and privacy considerations in shaping consumer trust and engagement. Together, these studies form a comprehensive foundation for understanding how businesses can leverage Instagram's unique capabilities to build trust and engagement across diverse consumer bases [12][13][17][18][23].

3. PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Statement Of The Problem

The proliferation of digital platforms has revolutionized marketing and advertising, with Instagram emerging as one of the most influential tools for businesses to engage with consumers. Boasting over 2 billion active users worldwide, Instagram offers unparalleled opportunities for brands to connect with diverse audiences through visually engaging advertisements and interactive features like Stories and Reels. However, the trustworthiness of Instagram advertisements remains a critical issue, impeding the platform’s potential as a reliable marketing channel.

Despite the increasing sophistication of Instagram's advertising capabilities, consumers are often skeptical of the authenticity, relevance, and intentions behind the ads they encounter. Concerns about exaggerated claims, intrusive targeting, data privacy, and lack of transparency have raised doubts among users, limiting their willingness to trust and engage with ads. For instance, while influencer endorsements have become a popular advertising strategy, they frequently blur the line between genuine recommendations and paid promotions, contributing to consumer cynicism.

Existing research has identified critical factors such as ad credibility, relevance, and emotional appeal as essential determinants of consumer trust. However, significant gaps persist in understanding how these factors interact with emerging variables like platform-specific features (e.g., Instagram Stories, Reels) and perceived privacy and security concerns. The mediating role of purchase intention in shaping the relationships between independent variables (e.g., credibility, relevance) and dependent variables (e.g., consumer trust, ad engagement, perceived authenticity) is also underexplored. Furthermore, previous studies often consider each variable in isolation, failing to provide a comprehensive framework that captures the dynamic interplay of these elements in fostering trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements.

The evolving digital landscape necessitates a consumer-centric approach to unravel these complexities. As users increasingly demand authentic and relevant content that respects their privacy, businesses must adapt their strategies to build trust and drive engagement effectively. Understanding how advertising elements influence consumer perceptions and behaviors is not only critical for marketers but also essential for shaping industry practices that prioritize transparency and ethical advertising.

This study addresses these gaps by examining a holistic framework of variables influencing trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements. It evaluates the direct and indirect effects of factors such as ad credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy concerns on consumer trust, engagement, and perceived authenticity. Additionally, the study highlights the mediating role of purchase intention in these relationships, offering a nuanced perspective on how consumer trust and ad effectiveness can be enhanced.

By providing actionable insights for marketers, this research aims to bridge the gap between consumer expectations and advertising strategies on Instagram. It also contributes to the broader body of knowledge on digital marketing, emphasizing the importance of trust-building

in a competitive and rapidly evolving marketplace. The findings are expected to guide businesses in crafting effective, trustworthy advertisements that resonate with consumers, ultimately fostering long-term engagement and brand loyalty.

Research Gaps:

The rapid evolution of Instagram as a digital advertising platform has opened new avenues for businesses to engage with consumers. However, several critical gaps remain in the existing body of research, particularly in understanding the trustworthiness of Instagram advertisements. While various studies have explored individual aspects of advertising, a holistic framework that integrates key determinants and examines their collective impact on consumer perceptions and behaviors is lacking. Below are the research gaps identified in the context of this study, aligned with the newly developed variables and research framework:

1. **Limited Examination of Combined Determinants:**
    - Previous research has predominantly focused on isolated factors such as **ad credibility**, **relevance**, or **emotional appeal**, treating them as independent predictors of trust or engagement. However, these determinants do not function in isolation but interact dynamically to shape consumer perceptions. There is a need for a cohesive framework that analyzes how these factors collectively impact trustworthiness and outcomes like engagement, authenticity, and purchase intention.
2. **Underexplored Role of Platform-Specific Features:**
    - Instagram's unique features, such as **Stories**, **Reels**, and **interactive polls**, have transformed the way advertisements are presented and consumed. Despite their widespread use, their specific influence on **ad engagement** and **perceived authenticity** remains underexplored. These features play a vital role in enhancing user interaction and trust, yet existing literature lacks empirical evidence to substantiate their impact.
3. **Neglect of Privacy Concerns:**
    - As consumers become increasingly aware of data security issues, **perceived privacy and security** have emerged as critical factors in shaping trust. However, their influence on key outcomes like **consumer trust** and **purchase intention** in the context of Instagram advertisements is insufficiently examined. With rising concerns over intrusive targeting and data misuse, this gap

highlights an urgent need for research into privacy's role in digital advertising trustworthiness.

4. **Lack of Comprehensive Mediation Analysis:**
    - Existing studies often overlook the **mediating roles** of variables like **purchase intention**, **consumer trust**, and **ad engagement** in the relationships between independent variables (e.g., credibility, relevance, emotional appeal) and outcomes such as perceived authenticity. A comprehensive mediation analysis is essential to understand the indirect pathways through which advertising factors influence consumer behavior, thereby offering deeper insights into the mechanisms of trust-building.
5. **Absence of Social Influence Consideration (Adjusted for Elimination):**
    - While **social influence** was previously considered a critical factor, its role as a standalone variable has been eliminated in this study. Instead, the focus is now on more direct and tangible variables such as emotional appeal and platform-specific features. This adjustment aligns the research framework with a more consumer-centric approach, prioritizing actionable and measurable determinants over abstract constructs like social proof.
6. **Limited Research on Variable Interactions:**
    - The interactions between **independent variables** (e.g., credibility, relevance) and their collective impact on dependent variables (**consumer trust**, **ad engagement**, **perceived authenticity**) remain underexplored. Investigating these relationships in an integrated manner is critical to developing a nuanced understanding of how Instagram advertisements influence consumer perceptions.
7. **Insufficient Evidence on Mediator-Outcome Relationships:**
    - While **purchase intention** has been identified as a key mediating variable, its reciprocal influence on dependent variables like trust and engagement is under-researched. Understanding how purchase intention interacts with consumer trust, engagement, and authenticity will provide a more holistic view of the advertising ecosystem on Instagram.

By addressing these gaps, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital advertising and consumer behavior. The integration of variables such as **ad credibility**, **relevance**, **emotional appeal**, **platform-specific features**, and **perceived privacy** into a

cohesive framework offers a comprehensive approach to understanding trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements. Additionally, the focus on mediation analysis will help uncover the nuanced pathways through which these factors influence consumer outcomes, providing actionable insights for marketers and researchers alike.

Scope and Coverage: This study seeks to address the identified research gaps by developing a consumer-centric framework to explore the determinants of trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements. The research adopts a comprehensive approach to examine the relationships among the key variables and their impact on consumer perceptions and behaviors. The specific scope and coverage of the study include:

1. **Investigating the Combined Effect of Key Independent Variables:**
    - The study examines how five key independent variables—**credibility of the ad content**, **relevance of the ad**, **emotional appeal**, **platform-specific features**, and **perceived privacy and security**—influence trustworthiness. These variables have been identified as critical factors shaping consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity in Instagram advertisements. By analyzing their collective impact, the research provides a holistic view of how these determinants work together to enhance or hinder ad effectiveness.
2. **Analyzing the Mediating Role of Purchase Intention:**
    - The study focuses on the mediating roles of **purchase intention** in connecting independent variables with dependent outcomes such as **consumer trust**, **ad engagement**, and **perceived authenticity**. Understanding these pathways helps uncover the indirect effects of advertising elements on consumer behavior and decision-making.
3. **Refining the Dependent Variables:**
    - The dependent variables—**consumer trust**, **ad engagement**, and **perceived authenticity**—are analyzed as critical outcomes influenced by the independent variables. These dependent variables reflect consumer perceptions and interactions with Instagram advertisements, offering actionable insights for businesses to optimize their advertising strategies.
4. **Developing a Comprehensive Research Model:**
    - A detailed research model is developed to capture the direct and indirect relationships between the variables. This model incorporates insights from

existing literature while integrating the findings of this study, ensuring both theoretical rigor and practical relevance. The model aims to provide marketers with actionable strategies to build trust and engagement, ultimately driving consumer purchase behavior.

By addressing these areas, the study bridges the gap between consumer expectations and advertising practices on Instagram. The findings are expected to guide marketers in crafting advertisements that resonate with consumers while ensuring transparency, relevance, and privacy. This approach not only contributes to academic literature but also offers practical tools for businesses to build trust and foster long-term consumer engagement in the competitive digital marketplace.

Research Issues: The study addresses critical questions related to trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements by focusing on the following key areas:

- **How credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy affect consumer trust, engagement, and authenticity:** These independent variables are crucial drivers of consumer perceptions. By analyzing their direct relationships with **consumer trust**, **ad engagement**, and **perceived authenticity**, this study seeks to uncover how these factors contribute to building trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements. Understanding these dynamics will offer actionable insights into optimizing ad content for greater consumer acceptance.
- **The mediating role of purchase intention:** The study examines how **purchase intention** acts as a bridge between independent variables (e.g., ad credibility, emotional appeal, and privacy) and dependent variables (e.g., consumer trust, engagement, and authenticity). This mediating relationship highlights the importance of purchase intent as both an outcome of trust-building activities and a factor reinforcing consumer perceptions of authenticity and engagement.
- **The reciprocal influence between dependent variables:** Consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity are interrelated constructs that both shape and are shaped by purchase intention. This study investigates how these variables interact to reinforce each other and drive overall trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements.

This investigation aims to provide a comprehensive framework that not only addresses existing research gaps but also aligns with the **consumer-centric approach** of the study. The findings

are expected to offer practical recommendations for marketers, emphasizing strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of Instagram advertisements and improve their effectiveness.

3.2 Significance / Rationale Of The Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the growing body of knowledge on digital marketing and consumer behavior, particularly focusing on Instagram advertisements. It addresses critical challenges in building trust, engagement, and authenticity in an increasingly digital world. The findings are expected to benefit researchers, marketers, businesses, and policymakers by providing actionable insights and addressing pressing issues in digital advertising.

Motivation and Justification:

1. **Consumer-Centric Insights:** Instagram is inherently a consumer-driven platform. Understanding the factors influencing the trustworthiness of advertisements from the consumer's perspective is crucial. This study offers a comprehensive evaluation of variables such as **ad credibility**, **relevance**, **emotional appeal**, **platform-specific features**, and **privacy concerns**, helping businesses create relatable and effective ads.
2. **Strategic Relevance for Businesses:** By exploring mediators like **purchase intention** and its effect on consumer trust, engagement, and authenticity, the study equips marketers with a roadmap to optimize advertisements. This alignment with consumer preferences ultimately enhances marketing ROI.
3. **Policy Implications:** With increasing consumer awareness of data privacy, this research provides insights into the importance of **perceived privacy and security** in advertising strategies. The findings can guide policymakers in developing ethical practices and ensuring compliance with data protection laws to foster consumer confidence.

Contribution of Findings:

1. **Theoretical Advancement:**
    - The study proposes an integrated research model, bridging gaps in existing literature by examining the collective impact of combined variables and mediators.

    - It expands theoretical frameworks by incorporating underexplored variables like **platform-specific features** and **privacy concerns**, offering a nuanced understanding of trust-building in digital advertising.
2. **Practical Applications:**
    - Provides businesses with strategies to enhance **ad credibility**, **relevance**, and **authenticity**.
    - Demonstrates the importance of **emotional appeal** in influencing consumer trust and engagement, helping marketers create more resonant advertisements.
3. **Addressing Emerging Challenges:**
    - Highlights the vital role of **perceived privacy and security** in shaping consumer trust and purchase decisions, which is critical amidst growing concerns over data breaches and misinformation.

By aligning with a **consumer-centric approach**, this study addresses the evolving needs of consumers and marketers, contributing to the development of effective, trustworthy advertising strategies that resonate with Instagram users.

Why is it Worth Doing?: With Instagram's growing dominance in the advertising space, this study offers significant value by addressing real-world challenges faced by businesses and consumers. Its findings will:

- Help businesses align their strategies with consumer expectations.
- Provide consumers with a safer and more engaging advertising experience.
- Contribute to ethical advertising practices and sustainable digital marketing growth.

Operational Definitions:

1. **Trustworthiness:** The degree to which consumers perceive Instagram advertisements as reliable, authentic, and credible.
2. **Consumer Trust:** Confidence consumers place in the brand or product based on their interaction with Instagram advertisements.
3. **Ad Engagement:** The extent of consumer interaction with the advertisement, including measurable actions such as likes, comments, shares, and clicks.
4. **Perceived Authenticity:** Consumers' perception of the genuineness, relatability, and transparency of an advertisement and the brand it represents.

5. **Purchase Intention:** The likelihood of a consumer deciding to purchase a product or service after engaging with an Instagram advertisement, acting as a mediating variable in this study.
6. **Platform-Specific Features (New):** The unique functionalities offered by Instagram, such as Stories, Reels, and interactive polls, which enhance the user experience and influence ad effectiveness.
7. **Perceived Privacy and Security (New):** Consumer perceptions regarding the safety and protection of their personal data when interacting with Instagram advertisements.

3.3. Objectives Of The Study

1. **To analyze the impact of the credibility of Instagram advertisements on consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity.**
    - This objective examines how the accuracy, trustworthiness, and believability of Instagram ads influence key consumer perceptions and interactions.
2. **To examine the relevance of Instagram advertisements to the target audience and its influence on consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity.**
    - This focuses on understanding how tailored content aligned with consumer needs affects trust and engagement.
3. **To assess the role of emotional appeal in Instagram advertisements in shaping consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity.**
    - This objective evaluates the impact of emotional triggers like humor, empathy, and inspiration on consumer perceptions and behaviors.
4. **To evaluate the influence of platform-specific features (e.g., Stories, Reels) on consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity in Instagram advertisements.**
    - This investigates how Instagram’s unique functionalities enhance engagement and build trust among users.

5. **To explore the role of perceived privacy and security in Instagram advertisements and its effect on consumer trust and purchase intention.**

    - This addresses consumer concerns about data security and their influence on trust and buying behavior.

6. **To determine the mediating effects of purchase intention on the relationship between independent variables (credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy) and dependent variables (consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity).**

    - This aims to understand how intent to purchase bridges the gap between the determinants of advertisements and consumer outcomes.

3.4. Research Hypotheses

H1: Credibility of the Ad Content

- **$H1_0$ (Null):** Credibility of the ad content does not positively impact consumer trust, ad engagement, or perceived authenticity.
- **$H1_a$ (Alternate):** Credibility of the ad content positively impacts consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity.

H2: Relevance of the Ad to the Consumer

- **$H2_0$ (Null):** Relevance of the ad does not positively influence consumer trust, ad engagement, or perceived authenticity.
- **$H2_a$ (Alternate):** Relevance of the ad positively influences consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity.

H3: Emotional Appeal of the Ad

- **$H3_0$ (Null):** Emotional appeal in Instagram advertisements does not positively affect consumer trust, ad engagement, or perceived authenticity.
- **$H3_a$ (Alternate):** Emotional appeal in Instagram advertisements positively affects consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity.

H4: Platform-Specific Features

- **$H4_0$ (Null):** Platform-specific features (e.g., Stories, Reels) do not enhance consumer trust, ad engagement, or perceived authenticity.
- **$H4_a$ (Alternate):** Platform-specific features (e.g., Stories, Reels) enhance consumer trust, ad engagement, and perceived authenticity.

H5: Perceived Privacy and Security

- **$H5_0$ (Null):** Perceived privacy and security do not positively influence consumer trust or purchase intention.
- **$H5_a$ (Alternate):** Perceived privacy and security positively influence consumer trust and purchase intention.

H6: Consumer Trust

- **$H6_0$ (Null):** Consumer trust does not mediate the relationship between independent variables (credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy) and purchase intention.
- **$H6_a$ (Alternate):** Consumer trust mediates the relationship between independent variables (credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy) and purchase intention.

H7: Ad Engagement

- **$H7_0$ (Null):** Ad engagement does not mediate the relationship between independent variables (credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, and platform-specific features) and purchase intention.
- **$H7_a$ (Alternate):** Ad engagement mediates the relationship between independent variables (credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, and platform-specific features) and purchase intention.

H8: Perceived Authenticity

- **$H8_0$ (Null):** Perceived authenticity does not mediate the relationship between independent variables (credibility, relevance, and emotional appeal) and purchase intention.
- **$H8_a$ (Alternate):** Perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between independent variables (credibility, relevance, and emotional appeal) and purchase intention.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The proposed study adopts a **combination of descriptive, correlational, and exploratory research designs**.

- **Descriptive Design:** Provides a comprehensive understanding of the determinants of trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements, focusing on identifying and describing key variables such as credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and privacy/security.
- **Correlational Design:** Investigates the relationships between independent variables (e.g., credibility of ad content, relevance) and dependent variables (e.g., consumer trust, ad engagement, purchase intention).
- **Exploratory Design:** Explores emerging concepts like emotional appeal and platform-specific features to uncover deeper insights into their influence on consumer behavior.

Design Strategy & Framework:
The study employs a quantitative strategies:

- **Quantitative Strategy:** Structured questionnaires will measure variables such as trustworthiness, engagement, and purchase intention. Statistical tools will establish correlations and causality.

4.2 Sample/Participants

Sampling Strategy: The study employs a **non-probability purposive sampling technique** to ensure the inclusion of respondents who actively engage with Instagram advertisements in **Jaipur**. This approach targets Instagram users with direct experience interacting with ads.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:

- **Inclusion:** Respondents must be active Instagram users aged 18–45 years, residing in Jaipur, and with a history of engaging with Instagram advertisements (likes, comments, or purchases).
- **Exclusion:** Individuals who do not use Instagram or do not interact with advertisements will be excluded.

Sample Recruitment:
Participants will be approached through:

- **Online Surveys:** Distributed via Instagram, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms targeting Jaipur residents.
- **Local Collaborations:** Collaborations with local educational institutions and businesses in Jaipur to reach potential respondents.

Sample Size Determination: The sample size for this study has been designed to ensure comprehensive and reliable insights into Instagram users' interaction with advertisements across Jaipur. Considering the diverse population and the large number of Instagram users in the district, the study aims to gather responses from approximately 500 participants. This sample size has been chosen to provide a broader representation, capturing varied consumer perspectives across different demographics.

This slightly larger sample size also provides a buffer for potential non-responses or incomplete surveys, further enhancing the reliability of the findings.

4.3 Operational Definitions of the Variables

1. **Credibility of the Ad Content**: The degree to which the ad content is accurate, trustworthy, and authentic as perceived by the consumer.
2. **Relevance of the Ad to the Consumer**: The alignment of the advertisement with the interests and needs of the target audience.
3. **Emotional Appeal of the Ad**: The extent to which the advertisement elicits positive emotions such as empathy or humor.
4. **Platform-Specific Features**: Unique Instagram functionalities such as Stories and Reels that enhance user interaction with advertisements.

5. **Perceived Privacy and Security**: Consumers' perception of how well their data and privacy are protected by the advertising platform.
6. **Consumer Trust**: The confidence consumers have in the brand or product promoted in the ad.
7. **Ad Engagement**: The level of interaction with the ad, such as clicks, likes, comments, and shares.
8. **Perceived Authenticity**: The degree to which the consumer perceives the ad and the brand behind it as genuine.
9. **Purchase Intention**: The likelihood of purchasing the product or service after interacting with the advertisement.

4.4 Data Collection

i) Primary Data Collection:

- **Universe of the Study:** Active Instagram users in Jaipur.
- **Sampling Design:** Non-probability purposive sampling.
- **Tools:**
    - Structured questionnaire (5-point Likert scale) to measure all variables.
- **Techniques:**
    - **Scales:** Validated scales for trust, engagement, and purchase intention will be adapted.
    - **Statistical Tools:** SPSS and Smart PLS will be employed for data analysis.
    - **Software:** Excel for initial data cleaning and SPSS for descriptive and inferential statistics.

ii) Secondary Data Collection:

- **Sources:**
    - **Reports:** Industry reports on Instagram advertising trends in Jaipur.
    - **Literature:** Peer-reviewed journal articles from databases like Scopus, Web of Science, and Elsevier.
    - **Internet:** Data on Instagram user demographics and advertising performance.
    - **Case Studies:** Local advertising campaigns analyzed for comparative insights.

iii) Procedure:

- **Data Collection Steps:**
    1. **Approvals:** Permissions will be obtained from the institution and ethical review boards.
    2. **Pilot Testing:** The questionnaire will be tested with 30 respondents for reliability and validity.
    3. **Survey Distribution:** Surveys will be distributed online through Google Forms and in person also.

iv) Ethical Considerations:

- **Informed Consent:** Participants will provide explicit consent before participating.
- **Confidentiality:** Data will be anonymized to ensure respondent privacy.
- **Storage:** Collected data will be securely stored in encrypted formats, accessible only to the researcher.
- **Results Usage:** Data will be used solely for academic purposes, with no commercial intent.

5. DATA ANALYSIS / DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview Of Data Analysis Plan

To comprehensively analyze the determinants of trustworthiness in Instagram advertisements, this study adopts a **quantitative** data analysis techniques. The analysis framework is aligned with the objectives and hypotheses of the study, focusing on independent and dependent variables.

5.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using both **descriptive statistics** and **inferential statistics**, as described below:

1. **Descriptive Statistics**:
    - Variables such as **consumer trust**, **ad engagement**, **perceived authenticity**, and **purchase intention**, will be summarized using mean, median, standard

deviation, and frequency distributions. This will provide an initial understanding of the data distribution and trends.

2. **Inferential Statistics**:
    - **Correlation Analysis**: Pearson's correlation coefficient will measure the strength and direction of relationships between independent variables (e.g., credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform features, privacy) and dependent variables.
    - **Regression Analysis**: Multiple linear regression models will assess the direct and indirect impacts of independent variables on dependent variables.
    - **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)**: SEM will evaluate the hypothesized relationships, including mediation effects of purchase intention on **consumer trust**, **ad engagement**, and **perceived authenticity** and vice a versa

5.3 Measurement of Key Variables

The variables will be measured as follows:

1. **Credibility of the Ad Content**:
    - Measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High).
    - Constructs include accuracy, believability, and authenticity.
2. **Relevance of the Ad to the Consumer**:
    - Measured via consumer alignment with interests and needs on a 5-point Likert scale.
3. **Emotional Appeal of the Ad**:
    - Emotional resonance evaluated through consumer ratings of humor, empathy, and inspiration.
4. **Platform-Specific Features**:
    - Metrics include interaction rates with Stories, Reels, and overall user satisfaction with platform-specific tools.
5. **Perceived Privacy and Security**:
    - Consumers' perceptions of data safety, assessed through survey items on privacy confidence.
6. **Dependent Variables (Trust, Engagement, Authenticity, Purchase Intention, and Social Influence)**:
    - **Trust:** Measured by confidence in ad and brand credibility.

- **Engagement:** Metrics include likes, comments, shares, and time spent interacting.
- **Authenticity:** Evaluated through perceptions of genuineness in ad presentation.

7. **Mediating Variable**

- **Purchase Intention:** Likelihood to buy measured on a 5-point scale.

5.5 Analytical Software And Tools

- Quantitative data will be analyzed using **SPSS** and **Smart PLS** for SEM modeling.

5.6 Research Model Validation

The research model, based on the proposed hypotheses, will be validated through goodness-of-fit indices in SEM:

- **Chi-Square/df** ratio: Value less than 3 indicates good fit.
- **Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)**: Value < 0.08 signifies model fit.
- **Comparative Fit Index (CFI)**: Value > 0.90 indicates a strong model.

This section outlines a robust and methodical plan for analyzing quantitative data, ensuring comprehensive testing of the hypotheses and justification of the research model.

6. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

6.1. Limitations

1. **Sampling Constraints**:
   - The study focuses on a specific demographic of Instagram users, limiting the generalizability of findings to broader populations that may use other social media platforms.
2. **Temporal Scope**:
   - The data collection is confined to a specific timeframe, potentially overlooking evolving consumer behaviors and ad features on Instagram.
3. **Self-Reported Data**:

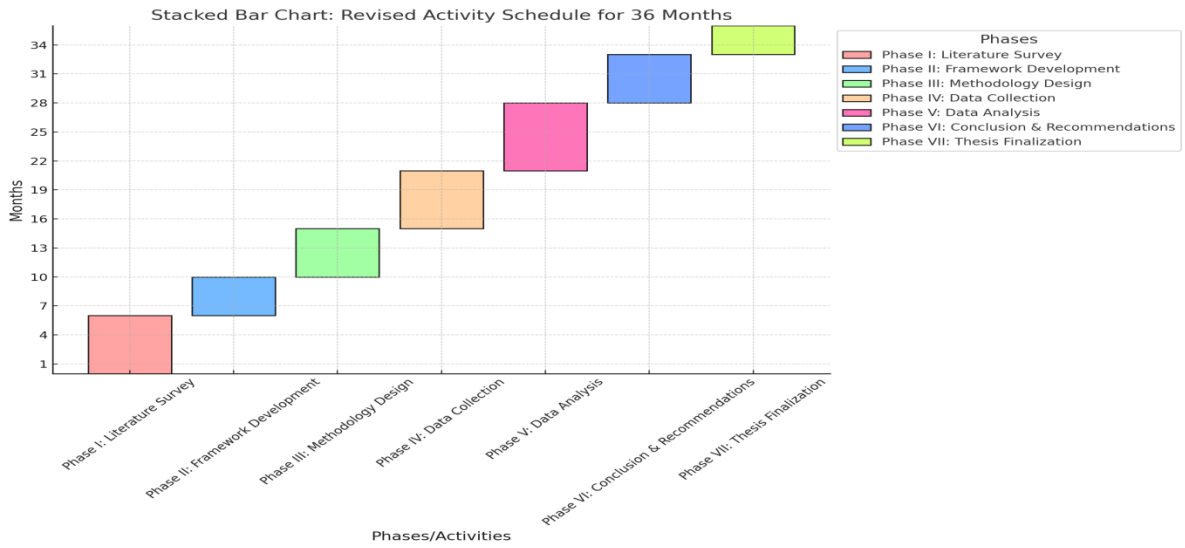
- The reliance on self-reported responses from participants may introduce biases, such as social desirability bias or recall bias.

4. **Platform-Specific Focus**:
   - The study exclusively examines Instagram advertisements, restricting applicability to advertisements on other social media platforms.
5. **Technological Variations**:
   - Differences in access to or familiarity with Instagram features across diverse participant groups might influence responses.

6.2. Delimitations

1. **Scope of Study**:
   - This research specifically focuses on Instagram advertisements, excluding other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Whats app.
2. **Geographical Boundary**:
   - The study is limited to participants within a defined geographical region (Jaipur), which narrows the applicability of findings to other regions or countries.
3. **Variable Selection**:
   - The research is confined to analyzing five independent variables (credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, and perceived privacy) and five dependent variables (consumer trust, ad engagement, perceived authenticity), and mediating variable (purchase intention).
4. **Consumer-Centric Approach**:
   - The study adopts a consumer-centric perspective, excluding the viewpoints of advertisers, influencers, or marketers on Instagram.
5. **Timeframe**:
   - The study is designed as a cross-sectional analysis, focusing on a specific period rather than longitudinal trends.

7. WORK PLAN FOR 36 MONTHS



Phase I: Extensive Literature Survey (Month 1–6)

- Conduct a comprehensive review of existing literature on:
  - Trustworthiness in digital advertising.
  - Consumer-centric perspectives on Instagram advertisements.
  - Independent and dependent variables, including credibility, relevance, emotional appeal, platform-specific features, privacy, consumer trust, engagement, perceived authenticity, purchase intention, and social influence.
- Identify research gaps and refine research objectives and hypotheses based on the findings.
- Compile a bibliography of significant sources for reference [1][2][3].

Phase II: Conceptual Framework and Research Model Development (Month 7–10)

- Develop the research framework based on identified variables.
- Finalize relationships between independent variables, mediators, and dependent variables.
- Create a detailed research model to visualize these relationships.
- Validate the model using insights from relevant literature and expert feedback.

Phase III: Research Methodology Development (Month 11–15)

- Design the research methodology:
  - Select the research design (quantitative, correlational approach).

    - Develop a structured questionnaire based on the variables.
    - Pretest and refine the questionnaire.
- Define the target population and sampling method:
    - Instagram users (consumers).
    - Sample size determination using statistical techniques.

Phase IV: Data Collection (Month 16–21)

- Administer the questionnaire to the target population using digital surveys.
- Ensure a balanced representation of demographic and psychographic variables.
- Collect and organize responses for further analysis.

Phase V: Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing (Month 22–28)

- Perform data cleaning and reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha.
- Conduct statistical tests to analyze relationships between variables:
    - Descriptive statistics.
    - Correlation analysis.
    - Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for testing hypotheses.
    - Mediation analysis to evaluate the roles of trust, engagement, and authenticity.

Phase VI: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations (Month 29–33)

- Interpret the results in alignment with the research objectives.
- Discuss theoretical and practical implications of the findings.
- Propose actionable recommendations for marketers on Instagram based on insights from the study.

Phase VII: Finalization and Submission of Thesis (Month 34–36)

- Compile the thesis as per the required format.
- Review and finalize the document for submission.
- Prepare for viva and dissemination of findings through academic journals and conferences.

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